

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WYNNE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

LITTLE by little Phil's calmness came back to him. Outside, on Mrs. Thorne's doorstep, he paused a moment to collect his thoughts. As he travelled up to London, he had resolved upon a certain programme; part of it he had fulfilled, part of it yet remained to do. It was getting late in the day now; street-lamps were being lighted; the red sun had gone; night clouds were beginning to spread themselves athwart the misty sky. It was certainly an altogether unconscionable hour for a gentleman to select for a first call upon a young lady to whom he was a stranger, except in name. But Phil having made up his mind that the call must be paid, thought the sooner it was done the better. He looked about him, and called a hansom, directing the man to drive him to the young ladies' educational establishment at Maida Vale, wherein Miss Lucy Selwyn was located as a boarder.

In doing this, Phil was actuated by two motives: first, by a desire to be of service to a young girl whom he knew to be left friendless and destitute in a great city; secondly, by a sense of loyalty to his dead friend. If Rodney had lived on another month or six weeks, so he said to himself, he must have come to his senses, and realised what duty and honour required of him towards a girl, whom he had removed from the charge of the only friends she had in the world and from the only means which lay open to her of procuring a living for herself.

Once, in the early days of Rodney's short-lived passion for Lucy Selwyn, driven almost to his wife's ends by his own short

purse and his mother's firm-fronted opposition to his dearest wishes, Rodney had resolved upon accepting a post offered to him in Egypt as special correspondent to a newspaper.

"If anything should happen to me—though I don't suppose it will," he had said to Phil as they talked the matter over together—"you will look after my darling, won't you?" Then had followed many and special directions as to what was to be done in the event of this unlikely thing happening. How that the mother was to be implored once more to receive the friendless girl as her own daughter, on account of her preciousness to the dead son; how that to Lucy's keeping was committed a certain document—Rodney's will—bequeathing to her every sixpence in the world he had a right to bequeath, and all the jewellery and art furniture of his extravagantly-decorated rooms in Jermyn Street. And Rodney had finished with handing Phil the young lady's address, reiterating over and over again, as he himself wrote it down in Phil's note-book, how unspeakably precious this girl was to him, and how, for her sake, he had begun to set a value upon his life, and trembled at the idea of mischance or disaster.

The special readership had fallen through, as so many of Rodney's projects were apt to fall through, but Phil's memory, busy now with the past, recalled with a mournful vividness these earnest entreaties of his friend and his own earnest promises in reply, and swore to himself that, in spite of all that had since happened, he would do his best to fulfil them. Then, in that past time—not so very long ago, after all—Rodney's better self had spoken, and to Rodney's better self his loyalty and friendship were due. In all that had since happened, Rodney's worse self had got the

upper hand. That self he would try to think of no more; would endeavour to persuade himself was a sort of nightmare creation of his own—a thing that had had no existence, after all, out of his own brain.

All this he said to himself as he rattled along through the London streets towards Maida Vale, and the shrine of Minerva where Miss Selwyn was located. The house—dubbed “college” on the brass plate on the gate—was one of a row of high, narrow habitations of yellow brick, such as that locality is beginning to abound with. One or two of the houses—notably a doctor’s, with a red conspicuous lamp, and a Court milliner’s opposite—had kindled into a glowing Pompeian-red, with brass knockers and handles, which served to render the faded greyness of the house at which Phil rang even more marked and depressing than it otherwise would have been.

A neat little maid opened the door, and left him standing in the hall while she went to enquire if Miss Selwyn could see him. There was probably no other place in which he could be asked to wait. In the school-room at his right hand, the major part of the pupils were collected together, conning their lessons for the next day; from the drawing-room over his head there came the sounds of a singing-lesson, hysterical shrieks and nervous flutterings of voice on the part of the pupil, and not a little stamping and vociferating on the part of the master. From another room the sounds of vigorous thumping on a half-worn-out Broadwood, with a muffled bass and a squeaky treble.

The neat little maid did not return. A small figure, clad in deepest black, came slowly, nervously—so it seemed to Phil—in her stead.

He rightly guessed this to be Miss Lucy Selwyn.

The hall-lamp was turned very low; he could only see the outline of a small white face, drooping, downcast, of a small white hand stretched out in tremulous greeting.

“You know me by name, I know, Miss Selwyn,” said Phil, as he took the small hand in his big one. “I thought you might like to see me.”

“I am thankful to see you,” said a voice as small and as tremulous as the hand he held. “I don’t know where to ask you, unless you would not mind coming into the linen-room for a few minutes. I had to give up my sitting-room a short time ago—”

Then she stopped herself abruptly, as though the giving up of the sitting-room recalled a time in her experience of which she would rather not speak.

It brought back to Phil, also, that painful image of Rodney’s other and worse self, which he was trying so hard to dismiss from his memory.

He followed Miss Selwyn into the linen-room—a small room situated at the end of the passage. It was fitted with cupboards from floor to ceiling; it owned to a curtainless window, a carpetless floor, a single jet of gas (without a globe) over the fireplace, and one long wooden schoolroom form.

On this Miss Lucy Selwyn seated herself, and Phil followed her example, thanking Providence that he was not called upon to sit facing her. It would have been even harder than he already found it to keep his own calmness while he looked full into that wan, tear-stained, heart-broken little face.

For it was a heart-broken face—there is no other word for it. The one jet of gas lighted it up pitilessly, ruthlessly, showing the dark swollen rims round each eye, the heavy lids, the drawn mouth, the pale face blurred and patched as nothing but sleepless nights and long hours of weeping will blur and patch a young face.

No attempt had been made to relieve the grimness and plainness of the girl’s heavy black frock. It was utterly destitute of those minute decorations which feminine fingers know so well how to add, and which turn so frequently the garb of sorrow into the most becoming dress a woman can wear. Not a sparkle of jet, not the tiniest white line round her throat, relieved the dreariness of her attire. One only ornament she wore—a massive gold ring set with one superb sapphire, which Phil readily identified as the betrothal-ring with which Rodney had presented her.

Miss Selwyn was the first to speak.

“I am so grateful to you for coming,” she said, speaking nervously and hurriedly; “now you will tell me everything—I mean, of course, when—when the—the funeral will be, and whether I may go to it.”

Phil was greatly troubled.

“Would you feel equal to such a thing?” he began evasively, feeling how hard it would be—nay, how impossible to tell this shy, grief-stricken girl the estimation in which Rodney’s mother held her.

“Yes, I could do that—I know I could do that—it seems to me a duty; there is a place at his grave which only I could fill, and I ought to be there to fill it. And

I know"—this added plaintively and half to herself—"when they lowered that dreadful coffin into the grave that I should not realise that my darling was lying in it!" But here her calmness gave way, she covered her face with both of her small white hands, and the tears came trickling through them thick and fast.

Phil laid his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Do try to calm yourself, Miss Selwyn. Shall I go away now, and come some other time when you will be better able to speak to me, and tell me all you would like done?"

Yet, after all, he said to himself, bad though it was to be an eye-witness to grief like this—passionate, heartbreaking, uncontrollable—it was better than Mrs. Thorne's cold, iron voice and manner, rigid and stony as death itself.

Lucy calmed herself with an effort.

"No, no—do stay!" she pleaded; "I have so much I want to ask you—there is so much that no one but you can tell me. I have not written to Mrs. Thorne, nor tried to see her, because I promised Rodney I never would unless he gave me permission to do so, and the very, very last time he came here to see me—only the day before the—the accident—he expressly forbade my ever going near the house. I thought at one time that, if I only saw her and pleaded with her for Rodney, she might perhaps forgive us, and we might all be happy together again."

"Rodney knew his mother—she has an iron will," murmured Phil.

"But don't you think this—this dreadful thing may have softened her? Don't you think she will pity me now, and think a little kindly of me, Mr. Wickham? I have thought of her, and pitied her a great deal lately."

Phil shook his head.

"Trouble hardens as often as it softens, don't you know?" he said.

"Then you don't think she will let me go to the churchyard and see him laid in his grave? Oh, Mr. Wickham, do go to her, and tell her how I have set my heart on this thing! I have not asked to see him lying dead. I could not bear to see his beautiful face as it is now. I want always to think of him as he was when I first knew him; but this thing I must do. My place will be there beside his grave, and I ought to fill it. I have set my heart on it—I must go!"

"But why set your heart on such a

thing?" reasoned Phil, knowing how impossible it was for this poor little desire of Lucy's to be given to her. "Pardon me if I say I do not think you are fit for such a terrible ordeal, that I am sure you would break down under it, and thereby, you know, of course add considerably to the distress of everyone present."

"Should I, do you think?" she asked, looking up at him wistfully through her tears.

She was so accustomed to be under control, to bend in all things to those set in authority over her, that it did not occur to her to be very stubborn for her own will now.

"Aye, I am quite certain you would. Look here, Miss Selwyn; I am going down into Buckinghamshire to attend the funeral; give me your wreath, or whatever you would like laid on Rodney's coffin, and I will myself place it there, and see that it is laid with him in the grave before anyone else's."

Lucy made no reply. Her tears came again. Poor child! five consecutive minutes of conversation was all she was capable of just then.

Phil made a little movement as though about to rise from the form.

"I will come again to-morrow morning," he said. "I fear I am only distressing you."

"Oh no, no!" cried Lucy, swallowing down her sobs and dashing her tears out of her eyes. "Do not go yet. Only think—I have seen no one to ask a single question of, since I saw the terrible account in the newspapers, and there is so much I want to know. Tell me, Mr. Wickham, one thing—you were Rodney's dearest friend, you knew all his ways and every thought of his heart, I should say—do you think he had anything on his mind the last few months? Anything, I mean, to trouble him beyond his mother's harshness and his own debts?"

Phil was greatly troubled. This was even worse than Mrs. Thorne's cross-questioning.

"What do you mean?" he asked, Jesuitically trying to find a loop-hole for himself. "What can have made you think he had anything more than his debts to trouble him? He owed a lot of money, you know. The Jews worried him horribly, I dare say."

"Ah yes, they used to worry him a good deal when we were in Paris, but he took it very easily then. But lately he altered so; the last three or four months

he was something quite different to what he had ever been before."

"He might have had some heavy losses at Goodwood, and, no doubt, it was always more or less of an annoyance to him that his property was so terribly tied down; he couldn't get at a penny without his mother's consent, let him want it ever so much."

"I do not think it was a money trouble that pressed on him."

Then she paused a moment, trying to get her courage together to take Phil fully into her confidence in this matter, and have a load, and a very bitter one, lifted from her own heart.

But her courage evidently was not easy to command, and when her next question came, it was put with a tremulousness, with a pleading look on the tear-stained face, and a pitiful ring in the sad young voice, that would have scared the truth from the lips of a bolder man than Phil Wickham.

"Mr. Wickham," she said, twisting her fingers nervously this way, that way, "do you think Rodney loved anyone else those last few months—I mean, better than he loved me, of course?"

Phil was silent a moment.

"What makes you suspect such a thing?" he asked at length, again trying to gain time for himself.

"His manner changed so lately. He was abrupt, absent, and two or three times scarcely seemed to know what he was doing or saying when he came to see me. I asked him at last what it was that troubled him so, and he told me he was a scoundrel, a villain, and not half good enough for me, and then he bent down on his knees and implored me to give him up, said he was not worthy of me, and begged me to let him go alone to his ruin. But of course I told him I would never, never give him up so long as I had breath in my body, and that if he talked like that, I should die—die of the mere thought of such a thing."

Phil's heart was feeling like lead within him. Not one word could he bring his lips to utter.

Lucy waited a moment or so for his reply. Then she began again:

"You knew Rodney so well, and used to visit the same houses in London, I know. Do be honest with me, Mr. Wickham, and tell me if—you—think—there—was—anyone—else—he—loved?"

Her lips—poor, white, trembling lips—

said this, but her eyes, agonised, upturned, pleading, said, as plainly as eyes could say it:

"If you say yes to this question of mine, you will deal me my death-blow."

Phil's face was white and solemn as he answered:

"I did know Rodney as you say, Miss Selwyn, as well as any man could know another, and in all his life I do not believe he ever loved a woman as he loved you."

And the sop Phil gave to his conscience as he said this was that Rodney's passion for Elinor Yorke was a mere midsummer madness, not that real living thing men of reason and education fitly call love.

Lucy's eyes rested on him wistfully for a moment; then she drew a long breath, as one might who hears a sentence of death commuted to one of penal servitude for life.

Phil rose to go.

"There is an envelope upstairs addressed to you. I will go and fetch it," she said, making a little movement towards the door.

Phil stopped her.

"Not now, Miss Selwyn. I will come to you immediately after the funeral, and you shall give it to me then. Here is my address in London; but I will send to you over-night for your wreath."

Then he said good-bye, and went back to his hotel, feeling he had got through a heavy day's work indeed.

ART, SOCIAL AND OTHERWISE

OF all the forms of art, the one that has the greatest possibilities of pleasure-giving is that of conversation; and yet in this age of art-revivals it is the one that is most neglected. For its highest development it requires, like every other art, combinations which, in the nature of things, can seldom be obtained. An individual may not infrequently be found who can and does talk well; who can give you graphic accounts of things he has seen, or a clear account of what he has read—even a comprehensive view of a subject he has studied, or a luminous exposition of some matter of public interest. But conversation is foreign to the genius of the English people, or, at all events, to the present generation of them. Conversation, in its highest form, means the conjunction of at least two people, who possess temper, tact, agility of mind, power and readiness of expression, and melody of voice. This is, of course, a sufficiently uncommon com-

bination of qualities, and we cannot expect to meet many such Admirable Crichtons. But art in any form requires for its highest development exceptional powers, and it is not genius, but ordinary ability in its social aspect that we propose now to consider.

Why is it that English people, as a rule, converse so badly? One would have thought that they, of all people of all times, live in a condition of things that would foster the development of the art. England, more than most of her neighbours, is governed by public opinion. The opinion of society, strongly expressed, will turn out a Ministry and change the policy of the country; and most Englishmen have pretty clearly formed ideas on the subjects of the day, whether they manufacture those ideas out of their own materials, or buy them ready-made of the newspaper-agent. In such a state of things one would have thought that conversation, if not light and graceful, would, at all events, be serious and interesting; that the intellectual movements of the day would certainly find some echo in daily conversation.

Again, in no previous time have subjects for conversation been so abundant, or information so general. Every daily paper contains a very plethora of news on all subjects—art, science, war, politics—and at no time, probably, has the world been regaled with such a wealth of stirring and romantic incident. It is certainly from no lack of subject-matter that our talk flags. But if anyone doubts that conversation is an unknown art in England, let him accept the next invitation to dinner that he receives, and consider afterwards the intellectual repast that has been put before him.

An ordinary English dinner-party is not, it may be said, the condition of things most favourable for conversation. Of all forms of entertainment, dinner-parties may be the most agreeable, and yet, as a rule, they only produce utter boredom. Nor is the cause far to seek, for success can never, except by accident, follow in any affair where the most ordinary rules are so flagrantly set at defiance as they generally are in this matter. This being the case, it is not to be wondered at that conversation should not thrive in their atmosphere. Still, were the art of conversation more generally understood, even our ordinary dinner-parties would not be so heavy, to the great advantage of our health.

A dinner-party, to be pleasant, should not exceed six people, or, at the very outside,

eight. To assemble more than this number is to ignore the hospitable idea that you ask your friends to dine with you in order that you may see them and enjoy their conversation at their and your ease, that each may add his quota to the general stock of information and ideas. With eight people it is difficult for the conversation to be general, with more than eight it is impossible, and if the conversation is not general you might as well be dining at the table d'hôte of an hotel.

Even with the lesser number, the host and hostess must exercise some generalship to make the affair go pleasantly.

In assembling their friends to dine with them, few people consider that the style of conversation of a party of four necessarily differs entirely from that of a party of eight. When only four people are present they can see each other's eyes, catch the smallest inflexion of a voice, watch the varying expressions of a face. The personal attraction of the individuals is able to operate; each one feels its influence, and the party becomes as one. With eight people this is impossible. It is only by very careful guidance on the part of the host that conversation can be kept general, and it is not every host who has this power. There is necessarily a much greater strain in talking to seven people than to three. To have seven people listening to you, and seven pairs of eyes watching you, makes it necessary to put your utterances into a rather more formal shape than would be required for the smaller audience. The nervous man who rather fears the sound of his own voice may be a most charming companion in the smaller party, while in the larger he would merely be a silent oppression; and though many women talk well, few would like to take up the talking-stick with seven auditors. For a party of eight, therefore, you must assemble conversationalists above the average, or must be content to see it break up into a series of duets.

It is, as has been said above, from no lack of subject-matter that our talk flags. We are as well-informed about, and as interested in, the events of the day, and as well educated—or as little uneducated, as we may choose to express it—as our neighbours. It is only in the activity and expression of the interest that we fall short.

And this deficiency of expression is apparent in other ways than verbal communication. English art of most kinds shows the same heaviness of movement.

Most people who care for art find their annual pilgrimage to the Royal Academy a somewhat depressing duty; and that, not so much from absence of talent and good work, as from the preponderance of commonplace—the overwhelming presence of what, in graphic art, corresponds to the discussion of the weather and other stock subjects at Britannic dinner-tables. The walls are covered with commonplace delineations of commonplace subjects; pictures that give one neither fresh food for thought, nor any new ideas on ordinary subjects.

The same thing is apparent in English conversation—the lack of the lightness and freshness, the sparkle that comes of the sun-warmed air and sun-born colour. The artistic instincts that produce the many-coloured streets of a foreign town and all the graceful sights that salute the eyes of the weary Briton when he crosses the Channel, are wanting in England because of the absence of the sun-born beauties that suggest such imitation; and our talk is deficient in the same way, and from the same cause.

There are various kinds of bores who pose as conversationalists; for the average hostess, having the fear of silence before her as the greatest possible misfortune that can befall her entertainment, is thankful if she can number among her guests one or two people who are sure to keep up a continual prattle.

Of the quality of their talk she is not so careful. They are useful because the sound of continuous voices gives confidence to those more diffident guests, who may have something to say, but do not like the music of their voices to be heard without accompaniment.

One variety of the species bore will keep on talking steadily, not only without expecting his neighbour to answer, but even treating any such attempt as a superfluity to be met by a raising of the voice. That, perhaps, is the most harmless kind, for you can follow your own thoughts without further reference to him than an occasional interjection; and the only annoyance you suffer is the enforced neighbourhood of so unsympathetic a creature.

Another and more objectionable kind is the *empressé* man who always answers you in italics, while his vacant eyes betray the lack of meaning in his emphasis. He is usually a very hollow wind-bag, with no higher ambition than to be credited with the outward semblance of “a good fellow.”

This appearance of good-fellowship is not difficult of attainment by those who are ambitious of it; for the majority of people are far too much absorbed by their own affairs and interests to care what their neighbours are thinking or feeling, provided they have a tolerably jovial appearance.

The only requisites in a “good fellow” are that he shall have a good digestion, a temper well under control, the power of always greeting acquaintances in a cheery voice, and, if he be a young man, some amount of aptitude for athletic exercise. No one demands of him that he shall be sympathetic or unselfish; indeed, unselfishness appears to be antagonistic to the satisfactory assumption of the rôle. When a “good fellow” takes the one comfortable chair in the smoking-room everyone is pleased. “Old So-and-so” always takes good care of himself, they say; it is expected of him that he should do so, and his admirers would think none the better of him if he left the seat for someone else.

“Good fellows,” again, are of various kinds; the army “good fellow” being different from the naval variety, the naval from the City species, and that again probably differing from several others—the costermongers, probably, requiring other manners in their favourites from those demanded by the navvies.

Another kind of conversational bore is he who persistently insists on agreeing with you, and will not be gainsaid though you make him contradict himself half-a-dozen times in a minute. He will agree with you before he has heard what it is you are saying; he will agree with you when you have spoken; and, lest he should lose a chance of making himself agreeable according to his lights, he will agree cordially with the exact opposite of your original proposition. From this kind of men, again, you can extract some amusement: you can experiment upon the number of times he will contradict himself in a given period; and there is always the wonder of where he finds his pleasure in life. The only really hopeless kind of bore is the dumb bore—the man who cannot talk, or, at least, who has only rudimentary powers of articulate utterance; men who are not necessarily devoid of intelligence, but who have it only in that unwieldy state that does not admit of its being communicated to their fellows by means of speech. An enforced companionship of any duration with such a man is probably more exhausting

to the nervous system than any other kind of labour; and it has been aptly described as "trying to light a piece of wet tow."

Conversation in its ordinary, everyday form does not necessitate more than ordinary powers of mind. A desire to make yourself agreeable to your companion of the moment is the first requisite. To enter into his thoughts and ideas, and by passing them through your own mind, and re-presenting them to him with some small stamp of your own individuality, assure him of your interest in him as a member of the human family. George Eliot remarks in one of her books; "Giving a pleasant voice to what we are well assured of, makes a sort of wholesome air for more special and dubious remarks to move in." And it is just this provision of "wholesome air" of which we generally feel the lack in ordinary English gatherings. We come together with no distinct purpose. We meet merely because it is the custom to meet. We sit down to meat with each other, merely because some absurd fanciful etiquette makes it necessary that we should do so, not because we have anything to say to each other, or any hope of pleasure in each other's society. No one tries to add to the stock of ideas by his own real thoughts on any subject of public interest, and correcting them, or adding to them by contact with those of his neighbours. Most of us, it is true, have not many such ideas to offer beyond such small residuum as remains in our minds of the dicta of our daily papers or periodicals; but even this meagre material would gain some human interest by being passed through the winnowing-machine of conversation. The dust that flies from a winnowing-machine is not very valuable, perhaps, but one may often gain momentary pleasure by watching it glance in the flickering sunbeams.

The real fault we commit, however, in this connection is our failure to recognise the pleasure that is given by the narration of even the most trivial incident in carefully-apportioned words. No one in talking takes the trouble to form his sentences according to the most ordinary rules of grammar. Our national shyness has stamped us, among other vulgarisms, with that false shame which makes us fear the charge of pedantry if we talk in other than the most clumsy and disjointed way. We are afraid to venture on a phrase—a combination of words that will convey our meaning of the

moment until familiarity has made it commonplace, and then we drag it in by the head and ears on every occasion till it becomes nauseous from its frequency. There is a dreary heaviness in our conversation born of deficient imagination. We discuss, or rather utter our words about the most ordinary matters with a solemnity which at first sight looks like earnestness, but we are not in earnest. We should resent the imputation. Every nation has its own peculiar snobbery—every nation, and each rank in that nation, and class in the rank, and each individual. One phase of it with us is the way in which we copy the habits or manners of the rank above us. The desire to copy implies deficient tact and power of observation, and the effect of the copying is very much that of the maid-of-all-work in a lodging-house who tries to copy the dress of the ladies on whom she waits. She has neither the material out of which to make the clothes, nor the power of wearing the clothes properly if she had them.

The calmness and absence of emotion of patrician manners not unnaturally suggests imitation. People, who from their birth upwards have been accustomed to deference, naturally acquire a manner which takes that deference for granted—an attitude from which the element of assertion is eliminated. The favoured classes with whom that is the case have also feasts of other things, besides the deference of their fellows. Treasures of many kinds are heaped upon them, whether they will or not.

Naturally, in many cases, a mental indigestion follows, producing a languidness of mind that sees everything in a yellow light, and nothing anywhere to admire.

By a singular perversion, this sad defect has come to be looked upon by some people as an evidence of breeding, and as such to be imitated. People are to be found—not individuals merely, but whole classes—who will refuse to be amused or interested, or to attempt to amuse or interest others, lest such an evidence of natural emotion should be taken as a sign of deficient breeding.

This foolish fashion is the death of all reasonable conversation. It is impossible to find any interest in the conversation of people who parcel out their words as if they were dictating cable-telegrams at a guinea a word.

And yet, bad as is the effect of this snobbery, it is not altogether to blame for our national unconversationableness.

The same coldness and stiffness and lack of imagination are apparent in all forms of British art. There is no natural teaching of art in England. In most countries where art flourishes, the ordinary surroundings of the most ordinary life are themselves an art-school—the warmth, the colour, the flickering sunlight, the luxuriant vegetation. Every sun-born glory of sound and sight touches the mind to some more tender and subtle vibration than could be attained to by our coarser, fog-nourished natures.

Every Spanish or Italian loiterer, as he lounges outside a tavern-door, can watch the smoke of his tobacco curling among the tendrils of the vines, and the sun making a mosaic of ivory and ebony on the road in front of him. His brother, in England, is wrapped in fog two-thirds of his year, and when the sun shines it, too often, but reveals the squalor in which he lives. He has no idea of open-air life—the sun shows him no glories, it only brings him heat for which he is unprepared.

The difference of the lives must make itself apparent in the manners of the two men. They may be equally worthy citizens; but their worthiness will have a different outward show. Just as a blind man nearly always has a whining tone in his voice, unconscious though he is of it.

Whatever art is attained to in England is necessarily the result of education—the art that is born of the sunlight in happier climes, in England has to be imported, and laboriously grafted on to the national character. There is certainly evidence in old houses and their decorations that it was at one time indigenous in England, though not, perhaps, in the loftiest forms. It has long been dead, however, and the phrase “decorative art” now only provokes a shudder.

The sunlight has diminished in the country—the actual light of the sun, and the corresponding brightness and cheerfulness of life. The problem of existence seems to press harder on the national life than it did in former generations, although in a large number of cases, one can scarcely conceive the circumstances to be worse now than they must have been then.

There is a grinding, aching care everywhere apparent, however, that seems to leave no soil for art to grow in; a drying up of the sap that leaves life barren and cheerless. In numbers of ways the life of the community is better than it was. Drunkenness, for instance, has decreased

enormously in the last twenty years; our lives are cleaner and more orderly; but the inner life that produces art does not revive, nevertheless. We have picture-galleries by the mile, it is true, and pictures by the acre—but they are acres of commonplace. Very few square feet out of the acres show any sign of that inner sense that stamps the artist—any observation of more than the merest outside husk either of nature or character. Not that that matters much in the majority of cases; for, except where fashion demands that they should be seen, as in the case of the Royal Academy, the picture-galleries have few visitors.

When the comparatively leisured classes, who could visit the galleries at their pleasure, are dead to the feeling of art, it could scarcely be expected that those below them in the social scale—those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow—should show more vitality in that respect. That they have no greater sense of beauty is apparent to those who have observed the way in which the lower classes of society spend their holidays.

There are few sadder sights than that evident lack of all knowledge of the enjoyments of life. The silly horse-play, the unmeaning personal decoration, the discordant sounds, are distressing to sensitive nerves, both physical and mental. The actual uncoutness, and the evident absence of all the refinements of human enjoyment are equally distressing. Bank Holiday makers flock into the country, not to refresh themselves with the freshness of nature, but to play kiss-in-the-ring and accordions. There are people who look upon the poverty of the labouring-classes as a state of things which merely makes their life simpler and plainer without necessarily detracting from their enjoyment. They know that they themselves have to bear many burdens which seem to them to be out of proportion to the increased conveniences of life that come with them, and they think that life must be better for those who escape both the one and the other; but they leave out of the question all the enjoyments that come of educated perception—they have not imagination enough to conceive what life must be without the joys that make it pleasant to them, what life must be to people living in a gloomy atmosphere, with no more knowledge of the subtle beauties of sound, and form, and colour than if they had been born deaf and blind, with no knowledge even of the language which expresses the more complex thought of the

species, and with only sufficient means to provide themselves with the merest necessities of life.

But this view of life implies a lack of imagination which makes art impossible—a coarseness of mental vision which makes all the lights and shades invisible—in a word, the absence of the artistic faculty. The genius of the age goes in other directions. Only a certain amount of power is possible to a generation as to an individual. The inventive faculty of this age goes in the direction of manufactures and mechanical appliances, and to the scientific investigation of natural phenomena. Life has been revolutionised since the time of our grandfathers. The construction of railways and railway-bridges, of telegraphs and tunnels, has taken the place of the carving of columns and statues. The bustle of modern life and the wonder of it leave us no leisure to spend in the beautifying of its details. When the putting of a girdle round the world is no longer merely a poet's prophetic phrase, but has become an actual fact, so that we can ask a question of the Antipodes and receive an answer in a few hours, we have no longer inclination to spend time and energy in the poetic apportioning of the words we use in those communications; and, when each word costs money, it becomes an art to render our meaning in the fewest possible words. A few disjointed syllables flashed across the world in that way may, almost by reason of their brevity, become poetic; just as a dog's mute caress appeals to our imagination from our knowledge of the limited means by which he expresses so much.

Art of a kind exists among us, it is true, and it is increasing daily. A new phase of art has even been born of recent years. Never—in recent times, at all events—have the more subtle and tender aspects of nature been so carefully recorded, either in language or in graphic art, as in this and the preceding generation. The minute and exquisite work of Wordsworth and Ruskin, of Frederick Walker and Hunt, have no parallel in former generations. They saw the world from a different standpoint to that of their predecessors.

But this is all the art of education—the work of the carefully-trained brain and eye. In former days art was diffused among all classes; the village carpenter and blacksmith had an instinctive knowledge of harmonious outline, and stamped

their individuality on their work. Nowadays we get our decorative work from Manchester and Sheffield, and cast-iron, veneer, and stucco fitly represent our artistic perception.

The age that produces the artistically formed details of daily surroundings must be one of peace and quiet, of concentration on the inner beauties of our environment. You cannot hear the murmur of the woods while you are listening to the sounds of concerted music. We live now in an eager, tumultuous world. The nations have come within touch of each other, and each has a message as yet scarcely understood by the other. The secrets of nature are being forced from her, and we are listening to them open mouthed. Our words are no longer pigments with which to paint imaginative effects, but symbols to express those recurring phenomena which we call the laws of nature.

That is true, but the world in general consists of mere gazers, not of scientific experts. We are concerned with the fairy-tales of science rather than with its formulæ. The general knowledge can be expressed in the simplest words, and the general intelligence is not capable of the use of the bigger ones.

Our modern life is full of movement, and colour, and interest. Every form of human energy is going on around us. We have a wealth of interest such as was unknown to our forefathers, and when we learn to describe and discuss it in adequate language ours will be the most desirable condition that has yet been known to society.

CHRISTMAS-TIME IN UPPER BENGAL.

A BRIGHT fire is blazing and sparkling in the spacious drawing-room of an indigo-planter's bungalow, where a number of ladies and gentlemen are holding an animated conversation. It is evening, and the chill air of the cold season has drawn the guests around the genial and social warmth of the fireside, the only home-like remembrance one does find in India. The short twilight, rapidly passing into night, dimly shows the massive old rosewood furniture; but now and again brighter gleams of firelight wake up the shadows and reveal later acquisitions in the way of fancy tables, lounges, and tasteful ornaments; while among the Christmas evergreens that clothe the walls mingle a few choice water-colours. The walls of the

room are cleft by no fewer than twelve doorways for free ventilation in the hot weather when the punkahs are in full swing. Each door, now closely shut for warmth, is arched by garlands of flowers of strong and brilliant hues, in keeping with the vivid taste of the Aryangardener. The festivities of the late Christmas "meet" are being wound up with a picnic and shooting-party at this fine old specimen of a planter's bungalow, ere the guests all separate again to the quietude of their different homes.

Presently the figure of a native, clad in spotless white, and crowned with a fierce pugri, glides noiselessly round the room, leaving all the lamps blazing in his wake. These illumine several rather pale-faced ladies in evening-dress, and a greater number of gentlemen of more robust exterior, well bronzed with plenty of outdoor exercise under a tropical sun. They are all in keeping, however, with the latest Paris fashions, the ladies displaying also rather a rich variety of English and Indian jewellery. A momentary lull in the conversation seems the signal for the khamamah to enter the room, where, halting before his mistress, he announces, with folded hands and solemn voice, "Khana mez pur," or "Dinner is served"; and the company file through the doorways into the dining-room beyond. As the guests encircle the hospitable mahogany, behind each stands a swarthy, profusely-bearded Mussulman, their spotless white garments relieved only by a coloured sash and band on the turban. Silently their straight figures and solemn faces glide swiftly round the table. The company, meanwhile, discuss, along with its delicacies, the balls, races, and parties of the late meet, accompanied with the usual amount of small-talk and conjecture.

At sunrise next morning, the ever-grateful cup of tea is conveyed to each before rising, through the medium of ayah or bearer; and by-and-by the guests drop into the verandah to enjoy the only fresh air of the day, and partake of the chota hazri (little breakfast), which is already waiting. Coffee and tea, with toast, eggs, and fowl, are the usual items of this meal, and while engaged with it you get a view from between the verandah pillars of a dead-level country, with patches of jungle here and there amid wide tracts of cultivated land, while in the foreground stretches a velvety compound interspersed with ornamental banyan and india-rubber trees, clumps of

bamboos, shrubs, and flowers. Winding along the avenue presently appear four great elephants, which soon draw up in front of the bungalow, and ayahs, bearers, and children, suddenly entering on the scene, turn everything into commotion. Servants hurry to and fro with guns, ammunition, and sporting gear, which the sportsmen see safely deposited in the howdahs; and, lastly, they themselves mount by a swing on the elephant's trunk, or by the rope-ladder that hangs from the side of the howdah, and the mahout gets the order to march. The ladies and children are to join them at breakfast a few hours later at the camp pitched on the hunting-ground.

Meanwhile, to pass the time, some of the ladies saunter down to the garden under an archway of acacia and other tropical trees that line the avenue; while through the leafy canopy glances the genial sun of the cold season with pleasant warmth, illuminating beautiful flowering creepers, parasites, and trailers that have entwined themselves among the foliage.

Entering the garden, we come upon a great variety of home vegetables, now at their height, and while admiring the luxuriant growth of peas, beans, cauliflower, brussel-sprouts, etc., we could easily fancy ourselves in an English garden, till the dusky visage of the scantily-clad gardener hovers before us with his profound salaam. In a shady corner stands the wild-duck house, where fatten some hundreds of teal—a table-delicacy when the burning west winds are roaring over the plains and the appetite requires to be tempted. Down the centre of the garden runs an arched framework, over which the vines hang in open-air luxuriance, and round the garden a thick border of plantains or bananas is overtopped by the long, drooping, feathery canes of the bamboo.

Now we diverge into a rhododendron walk leading to the factory, through which we intend to have a peep. The pathway brings us first to a public road bordered by a deep clear lake, on the edge of which are a number of dhabies (washermen) purifying clothes by dashing them on ribbed wooden boards placed in the water. One old fellow, in particular, amuses us by coolly polishing his head and face with a fine damask table-cloth, much to our hostess's horror and indignation. At a little distance from them swarm the village-washers beetling to a milder hue the native garments of six months' wear. Each

of them has bags of wood-ash suspended, from which is filtering out the strong potash solution for cleansing purposes. Farther on stands the wheel-house where water is raised to the vats for the steeping of the indigo-plant, the first process of manufacture. Close by smoulders an earthen kiln, where thousands of bricks are baking for building purposes. Presently we come upon a domestic group squatted by the wayside of old and young "grammies" busy at their hereditary thatch-and-bamboo trade. They are making thatch huts in separate detail by binding long dried grass an inch or two deep on frameworks of bamboo. Near them, under a long open shed, sit blacksmiths, carpenters, and brass-moulders, all on factory work, while outside the shed are a group of masons, squatted in the same lazy posture repairing an old vat. Passing on, we come to the press-houses, and finally to the long row of deep vats, where the indigo is steeped to extract the dye. In the native cutcherry, or office, near the vats, a low platform surrounding the rooms is occupied by a crowd of lallahs (clerks), Bengali Baboos, and the factory "amlah" generally, who sit cross-legged, writing up books, accounts, and letters in Hindi and Persian. The rough accounts are written on crude yellow paper of native manufacture.

Leaving the factory works behind, we re-enter the compound, where, near the stables, we notice a fakir, of repulsive aspect, all bedaubed with white and red paint and mud, and wearing a necklace of carved beads, made of the sacred root of the mint. In his hand he holds a long tongs, like a forceps, the special badge of his calling. Despite his hideousness, there is a look of deep cunning and conscious power, showing how well he knows the art of preying upon the religious superstition and fears of his countrypeople in order to replenish his stock of cash. Our attention is drawn from him by a tiny Tom-Thumb carriage, drawn by two magnificent up-country goats, coming rattling down the avenue. In it are seated four young children, with a body-guard of ayahs on foot. As we approach the bungalow again, we see an old woman, bent with age, ascending the steps, who had formerly been an ayah of the family, and is now their pensioner. After a number of salaams, she turns to the little girl of the house, and pulling some white hairs from her own head, lays them gently over that of the child,

reciting some chant or incantation to her gods for the little one's long life and happiness. The carriages are now ordered, and we prepare to drive out and join the shooting-party. Presently all are in their seats; children and ayahs are arranged in "shampanies" behind, drawn by bullocks, which bring up the rear at a smart trot.

As our cavalcade emerges from the shady avenue into the brilliant sunshine of the highway, clouds of fine dust now and again envelop us and half hide the large sheets of indigo-lands that stretch away from us in every direction. Beyond lies a rich and varied landscape of trees, fine crops, snow-white poppy-fields, and villages, and in the distance, over a broad, smooth expanse, we witness a mirage, where huts and trees appear floating in the midst of a glittering lake; a scene which keeps changing and vanishing as we progress. Two burly Moslems are stationed behind the first carriage to vociferate at all and sundry to clear the way, for the native pedestrian seems to have no ears to warn him off the centre of the road till he finds himself right under the horses' heads. At the well, or news-exchange of the villages we pass, are to be seen picturesque groups of women, whose musical voices and graceful movements, as they poise the ghyla (water-jar) on their heads, quite interest us. Now, in front of us, a troop of them occupy the entire road, and fail to hear the shouts of the syces till we are close upon them, when suddenly, as the endearing language of their countrymen breaks on their ears, there is a wild scatter, and with a swing of the "chuddur" over their faces—due to the presence of our men-servants—they draw up in line on the side-path and courteously present us with a view of their backs.

Our turf-grown road now leads through a shady piece of jungle, where the trees are quite beset with parasites, whose clinging embrace only one has escaped. It is a banyan, making a little forest in itself with its long pendent roots and arching canopy of branches. As we leave this sylvan scene, our ears are suddenly stormed with the sound of native music, and soon a motley throng passes before us. A number of gay cavaliers lead the way, bestriding white, cream, and piebald ponies. Carried mid-way in the procession, shoulder-high, is a red and gold palankin, in which are seated a little boy and girl, who smile happily about, delighted to be the centre of attraction. The "musicians" follow, meagrely clad, lanky specimens of humanity,

rattling on drums, great and small, their noise, fortunately, helping to drown the shrill, discordant notes drawn from a number of reeds, at one and the same time, on every key of the gamut. A curious instrument, like a buffalo-horn, gives forth a dismal howl at intervals, relieved, occasionally, with the clash of timbrels, and all with the most supreme contempt for time or tune that it is possible to conceive. The rear is brought up by all the tag, rag, and bobtail of the countryside, whose grimy coverings, in all the possible grades of dirty white, throw into strong relief our resplendent heroes in the van. This gaudy show is to celebrate the contract, or engagement, of the children, whose fate has just been sealed and settled to their parents' satisfaction. The marriage ceremony follows some years later, and in the interval they are not supposed to see each other. The boy, however, sometimes makes stolen visits to the village of his affianced, and, lying in wait somewhere near the well, endeavours to get a glimpse of his future wife as she comes to draw water. In the last scene of this matrimonial drama the youthful bride is stowed away in a covered cart, which conveys her to the home of her boy-husband, who keeps her company on foot, while her conventional yells from the cart proclaim the news to the countryside, and her grief at leaving her parents and family for this untried field of life. In this way begins the new life of the Hindoo girl.

But now, as the last remnant of the long procession fades out of sight, we drive over a great plain of turf, at the far end of which is fixed a gaily-coloured awning, surrounded by groups of servants. From another direction elephants approach, wading through long jungle-grass towards the camp, and gradually the green carpet wakes into life. On reaching the awning, we find a long line of tables already spread with our picnic breakfast. A busy scene now ensues, as empty carriages are drawn up under the shade of the trees, horses are divested of their harness, and elephants occupy their time in tearing down branches for their midday repast on the leaves, while ayahs and children scatter about in every direction. Opposite a tent a few yards off bearers are relieving sportsmen of their shooting-gear, while at another tent two ayahs take charge of the ladies and their belongings. In a shaded spot near the river, beneath the dense foliage of a tamarind-tree, little charcoal fires show where

breakfast is being prepared, while far away in the distance, towering above the trees, rise through the clear ether the snow-clad mountains of Nepal—the mighty Himalayas—two hundred miles off. To our right is a bend of the river Gunduck, a broad tributary of the Ganges, on whose banks, amid the thick shrubbery and jungle foliage, appear occasionally groups of chattering monkeys, brilliant blue jays, and minas, or speaking-birds of the Arabian Nights.

Our much-enjoyed breakfast is at length over, where fish, fowl, cutlets, teal, game-pie, prawn-curry, and fruit taste all the better for being partaken of in the open air; and now the servants hurry off to cook their frugal meal of lentils and rice and fish-curry by the river-side. Some of our party play lawn-tennis; others stroll about among the different camp groups along with the ayahs and children. The crackers distributed among the children yield great fun and excitement to the natives, as each explosion unfolds a brooch, ring, or locket, which the ayahs, with sparkling eyes, duly appropriate. By-and-by the elephants are marshalled in front of the awning, and the sportsmen reascend the howdahs for a few hours' shooting before evening sets in.

A few of the party embark on the river for a cruise a mile or so down, to visit a notable Hindoo temple. It was reached by a flight of steps from the water's edge, and around the outer court pundits were squatted on mats, their monotonous drawl filling the air as they recited aloud their shastras. We are received by one of them, who looks protestingly at our shoes, but, nevertheless, precedes us to an inner court, within which was the door of the temple. Here he informs us that we positively cannot proceed farther except on discarding our shoes, but he opens the door and allows us to peer through. Within this inner sanctuary are a bare stone floor and walls, uninviting in every respect, and not remarkable for cleanliness. In the middle of the place, on a small raised dais, stand three wooden images, life-size, very like big wooden dolls of hideous expression, got up in coloured muslins and tinsel. These, our guide told us, were the personifications of three of their most potent deities; the black-faced one, Mahadeo, being their god of evil, whom their votaries propitiate equally with the others. Nothing more was to be seen, which was rather disappointing, considering the hopes

raised by the splendid exterior, terminating in a lofty spire, all painted sky-blue and bestrewn with gilt stars. Retracing our steps, our swarthy boatman piloted us back to camp, where a refreshing cup of tea awaited us, and we found the sportsmen already there, much satisfied with their day's shikar. Their bag showed a plentiful assortment of hares, partridges, and quail, along with a splendid flovikin, that must have strayed down from the Nepaul forests.

The sinking sun soon found us driving full speed en route for the bungalow. Evening fires were being kindled in the clustering villages through which we passed, and the thick rising smoke enveloped the buffaloes in a protecting veil from their relentless foe, the mosquito. The ryots, or peasants, were dragging slowly homewards from their field-labours to their evening meal and the social joys of the hookah. As dusk closed over us, we required all our wraps to protect us from the chill air and heavy dews that were rapidly setting in. Near our destination we overtook the disjointed fragments of our late camp, in the shape of tables, chairs, and baskets, being hurried back to the bungalow on the heads of coolies. The foliage of the avenue was alive with the sparkle of the firefly as we drove through the compound. Once more we were in the bungalow, and soon after met again round the hospitable board, before separating next morning, each for his own fireside.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS.

PINK, crimson, yellow, cream, and white !
They call to mind the lost delight

Of summer's flowery days ;

The wintry wind wails loud without,

While we within draw close about

The hearth-fire's friendly blaze.

The flickering flames flash high and low,

They touch the room with rosy glow,

And make its corners warm ;

They kiss the sombre, pictured walls,

Whereon a gracious shadow falls—

My gentle sister's form.

How soft the rustle of the dress

That clothes her faded loveliness

In velvet's darkest fold !

How soft, how dark, the tranquil eyes,

Within whose sombre shadow lies

A subtle gleam of gold !

How calm she sits in this calm light,

Loose-holding in her fingers white

A blossom pure as snow.

A pale chrysanthemum—ah me !

Yet summer roses bloomed for thee,

My sister, long ago !

And I, too, had my happy share

Of joyous hope, and laughed at care

With boyish unbelief ;

I staked my manhood on the truth

Of that bright idol of my youth,

And won a lasting grief.

God smote me in my careless pride,

And all life's glowing roses died

With swift and sudden blight ;

Shame drew his most empoisoned dart,

And aiming steadfast at my heart,

He murdered joy outright.

And thou, my white one, clean of soul,

God bade his waves of trouble roll

Above thy gentle head ;

But lighter than my cruel loss

The burden of thy hope-wreathed cross—

Thy lover is but dead.

He is but dead, and thou canst creep

In twilight times to work or weep

Beside his quiet grave ;

To picture meeting on that shore,

The land of God's bright Evermore,

Beyond earth's wind and wave.

But I have no such sacred spot

To kneel and pray at—*—*he is not,

No more than this I know—

Ah, sister ! link thy hand in mine !

No change can touch my love and thine,

Whatever come and go.

And like these homely flowers that grace

Our quaint, old-fashioned dwelling-place,

A quiet blessing comes

Upon the evening of our days,

And growing by the wintry ways

We find chrysanthemums !

THE PRINCE'S QUEST.

A MODERN ALLEGORY.

ONCE upon a time there lived a Prince who ought to have been very happy, but wasn't. He reigned in a gorgeous palace, and was rich, and powerful, and great, and had everything he wanted—that is, at least, he had everything he wanted, except the one thing that he wanted more than anything else on earth, and to obtain which he would have given half his kingdom. He would have given the whole, for the matter of that, only he had already promised the other half to any one who would tell him what it was he wanted.

Everybody had a guess at it, but nobody seemed able to hit upon it. Everything that was suggested he had ; everything that wealth could buy, or skill procure, was his already. So at last he appealed to the wise men of the city, and they put their heads together, and found out the wrong thing, and the Prince became more despondent than ever.

In the palace his jovial companions made laugh and jest, and kept the walls for ever echoing to the tune of their noisy merriment. All day long they hunted the deer through the forest glades, or rode a-hawking in gay cavalcade ; and at night there were feasting, and dancing, and song, and

the wine ran free, and the mirth ran high, and happiness beamed upon every face except the Prince's. In the midst of all the revelry he sat silent and apart, or shunned the chase to muse alone on what this thing could be, the want of which, with all his wealth, made life seem so unfinished.

"Oh, is there nothing that will fill this aching void within me?" sighed the Prince aloud, one day, as he threw himself down on the ground beside a fallen tree. "Oh, is there no one who can tell me what I want?"

"I can."

It was a little old man that spoke; a little, bent, withered old man, with wrinkled face and snow-white hair; but his eyes were brighter than a boy's, and his voice was as clear as a sweet-toned bell, and, as he looked down at the Prince from his seat on the tree, he laughed a merry, childish laugh.

The Prince looked up at him, and wondered how he got there, but was too surprised to speak, and only stared in silence at the merry, twinkling eyes.

"Well," said the little old fellow after a while, "shall I tell you? Would you like to know what it is you want, or have you come to the sensible conclusion that after all it isn't worth the knowing? I think you'd better not know," he went on, changing from gay to grave. "It may make you only more unhappy. It will bring you pain and trouble. You are young and weak—why seek to know? Rest with the happiness you have, child. Joy is only reached through sorrow."

But the Prince heeded not the warning. All eagerness and hope, he started up, and caught the old man by the hand, and would not let him go.

"Tell me, you who are wise, and who know," cried he; "tell me what will ease this gnawing pain, or I shall die. Tell me, and I will seek for it through fire and water. I am strong, not weak—strong to dare, to suffer, and to win. I will find it, if it take me all my life, and cost me all my treasure."

The old man gently laid his hand upon the Prince's head, and a look of pity was in the bright, quick eyes.

"Lad," said he, and his voice was grave and tender, "thou shalt seek thy wish. Thou shalt toil for it, and thy brain shall ache. Thou shalt wait for it, and thy heart shall pant. Thou shalt pass through sorrow and through suffering on thy search;

but when thou art weary and footsore the thought of it shall strengthen thee, when thy heart is heaviest the hope of it shall raise thee up, and in thy darkest hour it shall come to thee as the touch of a mighty hand. Prince, it is Love thou lackest. Go seek it."

So the scales fell from the Prince's eyes, and he stood as one that has suddenly emerged from darkness into light, half-bewildered before he understood. Then stretching out his arms, he called to Love, as though he would draw her down from heaven, and clasp her to his heart.

"Oh, Love," he cried, "why have I been so blind as not to know thy messenger, who spoke within me? I might have wandered lonely all my life, uncaring and uncared-for, and never dreamed of thy dear presence, nor ever have known that 'twas for need of thy sweet voice that all the world seemed drear."

Full of gratitude, he turned to thank his mysterious guide, but the little old man was gone.

The Prince's own sentinels scarcely knew their lord when he returned to the palace, and even the old hall-porter who, twenty years ago, had rocked him on his knee, looked hard at him, and seemed inclined to challenge his breathless entrance. Never was a man so changed in half an hour before. Out into the woods had gone a moody, sorrowful youth, with wavering steps and dreamy, downcast eyes, while back had come a gallant Prince, with quick, firm tread, and head thrown back, and eyes that flashed with high resolve. Small wonder if the porter was in doubt.

In the banquet-hall his guests already waited his arrival, and hurrying thither straight, without a word he passed up the crowded room until he reached the dais at the end, and there he turned and spoke:

"Friends," said the Prince, "rejoice with me, for to-day I have learnt the thing that I want. To-day I have found out what is the only thing on earth that can make me happy—the only thing on earth I have not got—the only thing I cannot do without, and that I mean to seek for till I have found. Let all my true friends join me, and at to-morrow's dawn we will start to search the world for Love."

Then one and all cheered loud and long, and swore that each was his loyal friend, and swore that they would follow him throughout the whole wide world, and they drank a bumper to success, and another one to Love, and never in that palace had

a banquet been so gay, and never before had such merry guests feasted in that hall. Long into the night they drank and sang, and their loud laughter filled the palace full, and overflowed through open door and window out into the stillness, and the red deer browsing heard it, and scudded away down the moonlit glens, nor dreamt then of the time when they would fearlessly crop the grass round the very walls of the palace, and rest secure and undisturbed upon its weed-grown terraces.

But no shadow of the coming gloom marred the glittering pageantry on which the morning sun threw down his glory, as gay with silk, and flashing steel, and fluttering plumes, and prancing steeds the gallant train of knights and squires rode slowly down the hill. And hearts were light and hopes were high, but no heart so light as the Prince's, no hopes so high as his, as he rode at the head of that gay throng, the gayest of them all.

At each place that they came to the Prince enquired for Love, but found, to his astonishment, that, though people talked about her a good deal, hardly anyone knew her. Few spoke of her as a reality. Most folks looked upon her as a joke; others, as a popular delusion; while the one or two who owned to having known her seemed half ashamed of the acquaintanceship. There were shams and imitations in abundance, but the real thing, when acknowledged, was considered vulgar, and no one knew or cared what had become of her.

The first place at which they halted was the town of Common-Sense—a most uncomfortable place, all full of close and narrow streets that led to nowhere, and inhabited by a race celebrated for the strength of their lungs, it being reckoned that one man of Common-Sense was equal to a dozen poll-parrots, and could talk down fifty men of Intelligence (their natural enemies) in less than half an hour. The religion of this charming people was touching in its simplicity. It consisted of a firm and earnest belief that they were infallible, and that everybody else was a fool; and each man worshipped himself.

They were quite indignant when the Prince asked them where Love was.

"We know nothing at all about her," said the men of Common-Sense. "What have we to do with Love? What do you take us for?"

The Prince was too polite to tell them what he took them for, so merely bidding

them adieu with a pitying smile, rode off to seek elsewhere for Love.

But he had no better luck at the next place they came to. This was Tom Tiddler's Land, and the people there were very busy indeed. So busy were they, picking up the gold and the silver, that they hadn't time even to make themselves respectable, and their hands were especially dirty—but then it was rather dirty work.

"Love!" said the people of Tom Tiddler's Land. "We don't keep it. Never heard of it. Don't know what it is. But dare say we could get it for you. What are you willing to go to for it?"

"You can't buy it," explained the Prince. "It is given."

"Then you won't get it here, young man," was the curt reply; and they went on with their grovelling.

At last the Prince came to the City of Science, where he was most hospitably received, and where for the first time he learnt the great truth that everything is just precisely what one always thought it wasn't, and that nothing is what one thinks it is. The inhabitants were all philosophers, and their occupation consisted of finding out things that nobody wanted to know, and in each day proving that what they themselves had stated the day before was all wrong. They were very clever people, and knew everything—Love included. She was there, in the city, they told the delighted Prince, and they would take him to her.

So, after showing him over the town and explaining to him what everything wasn't, they took him into their museum, which was full of the most wonderful things, and in the centre was Love—the most wonderful of them all. The Prince couldn't help laughing when he saw it, but the philosophers were very proud of it. It sat upright and stiff on a straight-backed chair, and was as cold as ice.

"Made it ourselves," said the philosophers. "Isn't it beautiful! Acts by clockwork, and never goes wrong. Warranted perfect in every respect. We have a special committee of old ladies to look after it, and it has been highly recommended by the clergy."

"It's very charming," answered the Prince, trying to swallow down his disappointment; "but I'm afraid it's not the sort of thing I wanted."

"Why, what's amiss with it? It's got all the latest improvements."

"Yes," replied the Prince with a sigh,

"that's just it; I wanted it with all the old faults."

Again the Prince journeyed on, and came to the town of Society, where lived a very knowing sort of people called "Men of the World," who had the reputation of "knowing their way about"—a reputation, the acquirement of which it was difficult to understand, seeing they never, by any chance, went outside their own town—a remarkably small one, although the inhabitants firmly believed that it was the biggest and most important place on earth, and that no other city was worth living in for a day.

A dim oil-lamp burnt night and day in the centre of the town, and the people of Society were under the impression that all light came from that, for as they crawled about on their hands and knees, and never raised their eyes from the ground, they knew nothing about the sun. When they had crawled once forwards and backwards across their little town, they thought they had seen "life," and would squat in a corner, and yawn, till they died.

When the Prince mentioned the name of Love to these creatures, they burst into a coarse, loud laugh. "Is that what you call it?" said they. "Why, wherever do you come from? We know what you mean, though. Come along." And they took him into a dingy room, and showed him a hideous, painted thing that made him sick to look upon.

"Let us leave this place quickly," said the Prince, turning to his followers. "I cannot breathe in this foul air. Let us get out into God's light again. So they mounted in haste and rode away, leaving the men who "knew their way about" crawling about the ways they knew so well.

Farther and farther into the weary world wandered the Prince on his search; but Love was still no nearer, and though his heart was ever brave, it beat less hopefully every day. Time after time he heard of her, and started off, only to find some worthless sham—a golden image—a dressed-up doll—a lifeless statue—a giggling fool. Shams, shams, shams! Shams wherever he went, and men and women worshipping, and hugging them close to their breasts—fighting for them, living for them, dying for them, and knowing all the while that they were shams; and each time the Prince turned away, more sick at heart than ever.

Only a thin remnant of all that brilliant

host which years ago had started full of hope and enterprise, now rode beside the saddened Prince, and, as they toiled on wearily from place to place, the few grew fewer still.

Once they came to a place where Love had really been; but that was long ago, and now she had gone, no one knew whither. It was the City of Romance, and all the citizens were poets.

"Ah," said one white-haired old man, whom the Prince stopped to question without the gates, "I knew her well. She reigned here, happy and contented, when I was young; but these new fellows—they have frightened her away. They never let her rest a minute, but worried her to death. One day they would all be worshipping her, and the next they'd call her names, and want to kill her. On Monday she was a saint, and on Tuesday a devil. They made out that she was the cause of all the stupid things they did, and a man couldn't have the gout, or feel a little unsteady after dinner, but she was blamed for it; and when they told her that everyone who met her either immediately died or committed suicide, the poor little thing got so unhappy that she ran away, and we've never seen her since. I don't think they were very sorry. They didn't understand her any more than anybody can understand them. They've filled up her place, now, with a miserable half-dead-and-alive creature, as much like Love as vinegar is like wine, and the way they talk to her is really quite indelicate. Between you and me," continued the old man, "there is a lot of nonsense talked here. Some of us talk so much nonsense, that even we ourselves can't stand it, and we have to turn them out. They are called 'critics' after they are turned out—I don't know why—and they go about explaining what we mean. Why," and he sunk his voice to a whisper, "to tell you the truth, we don't know that ourselves;" and the old poet hobbled away towards the city.

And now, not a single one of all who had shouted their loyalty so loudly was left, when weary, baffled, and disheartened, the Prince at last turned back. A great longing was upon him to be once more among his own people, and to see his own land again; and so, with this last hope, he still toiled on, and each day pressed on quicker, fearing lest death might overtake him by the way, and that his tired eyes never more would rest upon the old grey towers and sweet green woods of home.

But the dreary road came to an end at length, and one evening he looked down upon his palace, as it lay before him bathed in the red of the sinking sun. Restful, now, he stood for a while, feasting his hungry eyes upon the longed-for sight, and then his thoughts ebbed slowly back to that morning, long ago, when he had bidden it adieu, and had ridden forth into the world upon his quest for Love.

But ah! How changed the place! How changed himself since then!

He had left it as a gallant Prince with all the pride of pomp around him, and a gaudy throng of flattering courtiers at his side. He crept back, broken-hearted and alone. He had left it standing fair and stately in the morning light, and bright with life and sound; now it was ruined, desolate, and silent; the bats flew out of the banquet-hall, and the grass grew on the hearths. Another had usurped his throne; his people had forgotten him, and not even a dog was there to give him a welcome home.

As he passed through the damp, chill rooms a thousand echoing footsteps started up on every side, as though his entrance had disturbed some ghostly revel, and when, having reached a little room that in old times he had been wont to go to for solitude, he entered, and shut himself in, it seemed as though the frightened spirits had hurried away, slamming a thousand doors behind them.

There, in the darkness, he sat himself down, and buried his face in his hands, and wept; and sat there long through the silent hours, lost in his own bitter thoughts. So lost, that he did not hear a gentle tapping at the door—did not hear the door open, and a timid voice asking to come in—did not hear a light step close beside him, nor see a little maiden sit herself down at his feet—did not know she was there till, at last, with a sigh, he raised his head and looked into the gloom. Then his eyes met hers, and he started, and looked down at the sweet, shy face, amazed and half in doubt.

"Why, you are Love!" said the Prince, taking her little hands in his. "Where have you been, sweet? I've sought you everywhere."

"Not everywhere," said Love, nestling against him with a little half-sad laugh; "not everywhere. I've been here all the time. I was here when you went away, and I've been waiting for you to come back—so long."

And so the Prince's quest was ended.

CAROLS.

WE do not know whether the word "carol" was used in England as a synonym for a song before the time of Chaucer, but we find that poet using it in a sense which has now fallen into disuse in this country, namely, dancing. The primitive conception of a carol, whether as a dance or a song, or a combination of both, is one of festivity or rejoicing. None of our surviving carols, however, go far enough back to throw any light on the infancy and youth of carol literature. Among the oldest we possess are to be found both the religious hymn and the joyous secular song in honour of Christmas. This, therefore, may be taken as the natural division of all our existing carol literature—the religious hymn fit to be sung in churches or religious assemblies and on solemn occasions, and the joyous song which might usher in the wassail-bowl in the halls of the great, or enliven the kitchen of the peasant or the parlour of the village ale-house. There were regular wassail-songs, which, from their character, could only be sung on special occasions, or at particular stages of a feast, or by persons going from door to door with a wassail-bowl. But although the carol is now associated inseparably with Christmas, it was not confined exclusively to Christmas rejoicings.

The custom of singing at Christmas dates, of course, from the beginning of the Christian era, and it is certain enough that the secular song was not associated with the sacred hymn in Christmas festivities until Christmas itself, as a genuinely solemn Christian festival, had become, to some extent, secularised by blending with pagan rites and conceptions. It was at a very early date in the history of the Church that feasting to excess was forbidden by the Fathers; and if excess in eating, drinking, and dancing had grown to such proportions in the second, third, or fourth century as to call forth a rebuke from some saintly ecclesiastic like Gregory of Nazianzen, we may take for granted that the secular song had taken its part also in the celebration of the festival.

Secular singing at Christmas had become common in this country long before the Norman Conquest. The outbreak of plays, masques, spectacles, mummeries, and disguisings which followed the Norman Conquest, with dancing and games of dice, was no doubt accompanied with secular singing. These pageants were attended by

strolling minstrels, and although we know only very indifferently how the early commonplace minstrels amused the common people, we fortunately possess in a manuscript in the British Museum, which has been reprinted by the Percy Society, the song-book of a minstrel of the sixteenth century. This collection shows at least that at the latter date these wandering Homers were stocked with an extensive supply of pieces fitted for every occasion, from the most solemn to that of the wildest revelry. Warton, writing of the middle of the seventeenth century, makes mention of two itinerant singers named "Outroaring Dick," and "Wat Wimbas," who sometimes made as much as twenty shillings a day by singing at fairs, festivals, and celebrations; and they would, no doubt, be as willing to earn an honest penny by singing carols as by singing jovial songs.

It is not till we come to the sixteenth century that we find carol-singing becoming a widely popular custom at Christmas and other festivals. In fact, the sixteenth century and a portion of the seventeenth may be regarded as the great carol-singing period of our national manners—including under carol both the jovial Christmas song and the more or less sacred Christmas or Easter hymn. We give a verse or two from a very old one describing a contest for supremacy between the ivy and the holly, which is found in a manuscript of the age of Henry the Sixth (1422-1461), and has been printed by Ritson:

Nay, ivy, nay hyt shall not be I wys,
Let holly have the maystry as the maner ys.

Holly stond in the hall fayre to behold
Ivy stond w/out the dore, she ys ful sore a cold.
Nay, ivy, etc.

Holly and his mery men they dawnsyn (dance) and they syng,
Ivy and her maydens they wepyn (weep) and they wryng.

The contrast, to the discredit of the ivy, is carried on through several verses. The same manuscript contains one of a sacred character of the same age, from which we also quote an example:

When Cryst was born o Mary fre
In Bedlam in that fayre cyte
Angellis sangen w't mirth and gle
In excelsis gloria
Herdmen beheld these angellis bright
To them appeared w't gret light
And seyde Goddis Sone is born this night
In excelsis gloria.

In one of the Coventry pageants belonging to the early part of the same century, there are three carols, of which that sung by the shepherds who saw the Star in the East may be given as a sample:

As I rode out this endenes (last) night,
Of thre joli sheppardes I saw a sight,
And, all aboute their fold, a star shone bright,
They sange terli terlow
So merrli the sheppardes ther pipes can blow.

By 1551 carol-singing had become common enough to justify W. de Worde, one of our earliest printers, in printing a set of them, from which we see that the singing of a boar's head carol at the introduction of the boar's head on the occasion of the Christmas feast was a custom then in use. Even as far back as the year 1170 it was introduced at one of the banquets of Henry the Second with the sound of trumpets. Dibdin, in his *Typog. Antiq.*, vol. ii, p. 252, gives a later version of the song than De Worde's, as it was sung in Queen's College, Oxford, but the difference between them is slight. The earliest extant poem, dating in the time of Edward the Sixth, ran thus:

The bore's head in hand bring I
With garlans gay and rosemary,
I pray you all syng me merely,
Qui estis in convivio.

The bore's heed I understande
Is the chefe servyce in this lande,
Loke, wherever it be fande
Servite cum cantico.

Be gladdes lordes, both more and lesse
For this hath ordeyned our Steward
To cheere you all this Christmase
The bore's head with mustarde.

On the other hand, Sylvester, in his *Garland*, quotes one which he considers much older than De Worde's. But there are better boar's head carols than any of these, specimens of which will be found in Ritson, the music for some of them being in Mr. Stafford Smith's *Musica Antiqua*.

As the splendour of the Christmas festive celebrations increased at Court, in baronial hall, and throughout the country generally, carol-singing became an indispensable part of the ceremonial and enjoyment. Among our earliest carols there is abundance of evidence that bands of persons roamed about from house to house singing carols, which generally contained a begging appeal for some Christmas charity in return for Christmas good wishes. By Shakespeare's time carol-singing in the streets was quite common. Sometimes the carol makes the singers beg to be admitted to a share of the Christmas cheer. There was probably no distinguishable difference between a wassail song and a convivial carol, as is shown in Stevenson's *Twelve Months*, where we read of "the chearfull carols of the wassel cup."

The Puritan Revolution brought carol-

singing, like many other social amusements, almost to an end for a time. Before the Civil War even broke out, an effort was made to substitute Psalm-singing for Christmas carols. As early as 1597, a book of "Godly and Spirituall Songs" was "collectit" and published at Edinburgh, with the object of superseding the secular songs of the period—the tunes of the secular songs, however, being retained. In 1684 a similar assortment of pious and godly songs was printed in English at Ghent with the like object. With the Restoration the rebound occurred, and carol-singing was resumed along with so many other old English customs, and held its sway until towards the close of the eighteenth century. All through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, collections of carols continued to be made and published, or republished, and these form but a mere drop in the ocean of carol literature in England, nearly all of which is now lost. Many a chorister in village churches tried his hand at carol-making, adapting the words either to an old favourite air, or—as sometimes happened—to a tune of his own composition. But as the old middle-age notion of Christmas continued to die out under the advancement of Protestant feeling and modern ideas, the significance of the carol to a great extent evaporated, and we read in Hone (on Mysteries), for example, of a carol with the curious title, "A Christmas Carol on Pekoe-Tea," published in 1729; and in a collection of Welsh carols, published at Shrewsbury in 1779, we read of a carol to Cupid, and also of a nightingale carol. Besides Christmas carols, the Welsh collection contains summer carols, May carols, and winter carols, showing, as we have already said, that the carol was not necessarily identified with Christmas.

While Chaucer uses the word "carol" in the sense we have already indicated, we have both with him and with the French the word "nowel," which not only means Christmas, but also a carol-song and a cry of joy. It had become so common in England as a name for Christmas and for carol, that it is constantly occurring in the old English carols in the one or the other sense. The following stanza from a carol belonging to the age of Henry the Sixth illustrates this point:

Nowel, nowel in yis halle,
Make merye, I prey zu alle,
On to y^r chyld may we calle
Ullo sine crimine.

And this of the age of Henry the Eighth further illustrates it:

I am here, Syre Cristmasse,
Welcome, my lord, Syre Cristmasse,
Welcome to us all, both more or lesse,
Come ner, Nowell.

The history of carol-singing can be traced to as early a period in France as in England, and the collections of old carols are perhaps more numerous in the former country than in the latter. The ignorance of the middle ages sometimes, however, led to an amusing misuse of the word, as in the case of a priest at Dijon, who, confounding Noah and Nowell several times in a sermon, spoke of the patriarch Nowell (Christmas), and of the rainbow of the covenant entered into with Nowell (Christmas). It is said that in Burgundy the common people confound the name of the patriarch with the name of Christmas in the same way.

Sandys quotes an amusing story from Pasquill's jests of a humorous old knight who, to make himself merry at Christmas, sent for many of his tenants and poor neighbours and their wives to dinner. He would not allow any of them to eat till someone had the courage to assert that he ruled his wife and to sing a carol on behalf of his male friends. No one cared about venturing on so hazardous an enterprise in presence of his better-half; but at last, "with much adoe, after a dry hemme or two, a dreaming companion drew out as much as he durst towards an ill-fashioned ditty."

The humorous old knight laid a similar obligation on the women—that none of them should drink until she that ruled her husband had sung a Christmas carol. Whereupon everyone of them fell "to such a singing that there was never heard such a catterwaulling piece of musicke. Whereat the knight laughed so heartily that it did him as much good as his Christmas-pie."

Sometimes carols were sung in parts, and there are manuscripts of the time of Henry the Seventh and Henry the Eighth, with music for them set to three or four voices. Among the expenses of the former King is a sum of thirteen shillings and fourpence, paid to William Cornish, a court poet and composer, for "setting of carrall vpon Cristmas Day in reward." Sandys mentions the entry of a sum of three shillings and fourpence in the churchwardens' account of one of the London churches, in 1537, "for carrolls for Christmas." It must be owned that the

literary quality of the old carols is very poor, except in the case of the few which come from the hand of such writers as Robert Herrick, Ben Johnson, or Pope. Charles Wesley's immortal hymn, *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*, is the grandest, as well as the most popular Christmas carol of our own or any time, and seems destined to survive all its literary kith and kin. Comparing the old carols with modern hymns, the inferiority of the former is immeasurable, and to pass from the one to the other is to enter a totally new world.

The subject-matter of the carols consists very often of some middle-age legend, the versified narrative of some scriptural incident, a little religious or moral poem, and the genuine Christmas social or roystering song. Among the legends and scripture incidents, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, *The Cherry-Tree Legend*, the message of the Angel Gabriel, the birth of Christ, the visit of the Magi, and the three ships, are favourite topics. In the carol of *The Holy Well* is to be found, perhaps, the sweetest stanza in the whole of carol literature. Jesus, when a child, had obtained his mother's permission to play, and on requesting some little children who were playing at the Holy Well to allow him to join them, they refused with a jeer at his poverty. Turning home in tears to his mother, he tells her what they said, and she, knowing the child's Divine power, advised him to return and destroy them. Jesus replies in the following exquisitely simple and beautiful lines:

"Nay, nay," sweet Jesus mildly said;
 "Nay, nay, that cannot be,
 For there are too many sinful souls
 Crying out for the help of me."

While the metres of the carols are infinitely various, the verse is too often the merest doggerel. But they are redeemed by their piety, their artlessness, their earnestness and simplicity; and from the point of view of the historian, they are of value as embalming sentiments which have long since passed utterly away.

LEFT OUTSIDE.

A STORY OF KENSINGTON GARDENS.

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT does all this mean, Miss Lane? A 'grand lady with blue gloves and gold boots' wanting you to go and see her, and giving Flo sweets—nasty, unwholesome things, I've no doubt, and just what I

should most disapprove of. 'Gold boots!' Have you been making acquaintance with some ballet-dancer? I really should like to know what my child is talking about."

It was on Sunday, and the whole family were assembled at lunch, a meal dignified for that day by the name of early dinner, as was proper in an orthodox Church of England household, with servants' souls to be considered—in the evening! Flo had been holding forth for some minutes in her childish treble, respecting certain sweet-meats which Egbert and Tommy accused her of secreting in a soap-dish, and eating in privacy instead of sharing with them. Mrs. Farquharson's voice broke in on the discussion in a tone of sharp, imperious annoyance, calculated to shatter the nerves of the most hardened criminal.

"They were bronze-coloured kid-boots, not gold," said Susie, blushing vehemently. "That is only Flo's way of describing them; and indeed, as to the little box of sweets the lady gave her, I have taken care she should not eat more than three or four at a time. I thought—that is, I didn't like to—to seem rude by refusing them."

"The lady! What lady? Do I know her, may I ask?"

"I—I don't know. No, I—think not. She is an American," Susan stammered faintly, her cheeks burning still.

"I think not, too," Mrs. Farquharson retorted sarcastically. "An American lady with bronze boots and bright blue gloves eating bonbons in the Gardens of a morning! An American circus-rider, or something of that sort, I should say, Miss Lane. I am surprised at you. And to bring my child into contact with such a person! I would not have believed it."

"Was she a circus-rider? But—oh, mummy!—they're always on white horses, and she hadn't a horse at all, or a hoop with paper on it either," Flo cried out eagerly.

"She left 'em behind her at the circus," said Egbert patronisingly. "We'll all go there and see her jump. Will she let us in free, Laney?"

Susie's confusion and timidity made it difficult for her to get a hearing at all.

"Indeed, Mrs. Farquharson, she—she was a lady," she said, more earnest in her friend's defence than she would have dared to be in her own. "I—I am sure you would have said so if you had met her. I think they are quite wealthy people. They—her mother and she—are staying at the Great Western Hotel for a few weeks, just

to be near the Row and Gardens, and we happened to be sitting on the same bench one day. It was quite by accident. We have only met two or three times altogether, but—but she asked me last time—I mean she said she wanted me to know her mother, and that if you could spare me—if you didn't mind my going there this afternoon. Of course I did not promise, but it would only be for an hour, after the children's service, and——"

"Not on any account," Mrs. Farquharson interrupted; "I couldn't think of such a thing, and I am surprised you should ask me. I always thought you so steady, Miss Lane, and if even these people were old friends of yours, or your parents—but strangers, possibly most disreputable——"

"What is 'disreputable,' mummy?" Flo asked quickly. "Is it something bad? I didn't like her, though she did give me the sweets, 'cause she called me ugly for telling Miss Lane to pick up my ball, and you know, mummy, you said I wasn't to dirty my white silk gloves, and Miss Lane's gloves is only common grey cotton ones. I 'fought' that lady very rude, and I shall call her 'disreputable' when I see her again."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," put in her father sharply. "My dear," frowning with marital significance at his wife, "I wish you would be more careful what you say before the children. Some of my best customers at present, people I wouldn't offend for anything, happen to be Americans. It would be pleasant for me if this girl turns out to be one of them, and Flo tells her we say she is disreputable."

Mrs. Farquharson coloured and looked annoyed.

"I don't see what reason you have to imagine such an unlikely thing," she observed testily.

"The same as you have to imagine the other. There is Van Groedner, now. I don't know a man I want more to stand well with at the present moment. He lives in Lancaster Gate, and has more than one daughter——"

"Who—lives in the Great Western Hotel!" put in Mrs. Farquharson crushingly.

But for once, Susan forgot herself, and before Mr. Farquharson could be crushed, turned to him with glowing cheeks and rounded eyes.

"Oh," she said eagerly, "she—the young lady, I mean—did speak of a Mrs. Van Groedner. She is not one of her daughters. She is a Miss Medicott her-

self, and her brother is something in the Embassy here; but she said Mrs. Van Groedner was going to present her at the next Drawing Room. She—she was on her way to Lancaster Gate when I saw her last."

"Aha! there, my dear, what did I tell you?" cried Mr. Farquharson with male injudiciousness.

His wife retorted on it immediately.

"What, my dear?" she repeated innocently. "Really, I don't remember. I was busy carving, and your conversation with Miss Lane not being a very interesting one, I am afraid I did not listen to it as attentively as I might have done. If it had to do with the person in the bronze boots, I can only repeat that whatever account she may give of herself, she is quite as likely to have made it up as not. If she had been anybody decent, or desirous of knowing me, she would not have set about it by striking up a clandestine acquaintance with my nursery-governess. Miss Lane, I must really ask you to drop the subject. I am sorry, even for once, to be obliged to refuse any request of yours, but in this case I feel sure your estimable stepfather would say that I was only acting in defence of your youth and inexperience."

Susie said nothing. In truth she was not made for fighting; and the grievousness of the disappointment only had the effect of crushing out her powers of pleading against it. She went upstairs after dinner and cried bitterly—cried till she made her nose red, and set all the children exclaiming at her; but how could she help it? To have the very first request for leave of absence she had ever made refused; to be shut up in that dull, hot schoolroom with three noisy, unsympathetic boys and one fretful girl, when she might have been walking happily over the green grass with her friend—for Virginia had promised to meet her at the fountains, and escort her to the hotel—oh, it was too bad! The poor child could have cried again each time she thought of it!

But fate had kinder things in store for her, if, indeed, it was fate who was kind and Mrs. Farquharson cruel, as to which there may be doubts. Only a few days later, as Susie was entering the silk-department of Whiteley's huge establishment, a familiar voice greeted her with:

"Why—if it ain't my Miss Lane! Mother, do see!" and she found herself in the clutch of a little outstretched hand from one of two ladies seated at the

counter, and almost before she recognised the speaker, was being introduced to her mother, a forty-year-old edition of Virginia, more powdered, more fringed, and, if possible, more dressed, with the blue eyes looking as if they had been boiled, the lilies and roses turned to whitey-brown paper, and the delicately sharp outlines of cheek and chin lost in seamy bagginess; yet at the same time so ridiculously like her daughter that no one would have dreamt of questioning the relationship for a moment.

She looked the essence of good-humour, however, and was certainly more polite than many English dowagers might have been under the circumstances; for she not only gave Susie her hand, but told her, in a very powerful nasal accent, that she was delighted to meet an acquaintance of Virginia's of whom she had already heard so much.

"Now, mother," said Virginia, pouting, "I'll not have that. Miss Lane ain't an 'acquaintance' of mine at all. Acquaintances are people you're introduced to in drawing-rooms, and just say ten stiff words to, and never feel like wanting to meet again. Susan Lane's a real friend of mine, and I found her out all by my own self, and thanks to a special providence. Say now, isn't she like Elizabeth?"

Mrs. Medicott looked dubious.

"Well, she is, some," she replied amiably; but Virginia was not contented, and whisked Susie off, declaring that she would go round with her, as mother would be sure to be an hour over her silks. The little fairy was in a more effusive mood than usual, flitting from counter to counter at her friend's side, talking all the time, abusing Mrs. Farquharson for not having allowed her to keep her Sunday's engagement, and buying half-a-dozen things which she didn't want; among them a string of blue Venetian beads for Susie, and a pair of long white mittens, which, as the little governess never went out of an evening, were not likely to be the smallest use to her; but which Virginia assured her she must have, because Elizabeth Emery had once given her just such another pair.

Nor was this all. It chanced that Mrs. Farquharson had carried off the three elder children to spend the day at Wimbledon, leaving her governess with no further obligations than a tolerably long list of things to be ordered at Whiteley's and other shops in Westbourne Grove, and

when Virginia found out this, nothing would satisfy her but that Susie should hurry over the shopping in her company, and then return with them to the hotel for some afternoon-tea; after which they would drive her home through the park.

Susie remonstrated in vain. It seemed to her simply impossible and undreamt-of that she—she who had never been inside the Farquharsons' brougham, except when sent with the children to convey them to or from some juvenile party—should take her place in that grand open carriage, to which an obsequious commissionaire was that moment bearing a multitude of parcels; should wedge herself in beside those gorgeous beings whose glistening silks and broideries made her plain little gown and toque of dark-coloured merino look still poorer and commoner by contrast. But Virginia would listen to no refusals. She had set her heart on the enterprise; and as—with all her shyness and humility—Susie was too innately a lady to think very much about her dress in the matter, seeing that it was perfectly suited to her position, and that that was well known to her companions, Miss Medicott got her way.

But what a delightful "way" that was! What a delightful sensation to be rolling along in that smooth-sprung chariot under the clear sunshine and cloudless sky; and how wonderfully different the world looked when surveyed from the elevation of that luxuriously-cushioned seat, to its general appearance from the standpoint of two tired little feet trudging along through the dust!

Yet there was a further treat still in store for her, for, as they drew up at the hotel, Virginia exclaimed, "Why, if there isn't Calton!" and, almost at the same moment, a young man, slight, dark, and gentlemanly looking, wearing a carefully-trimmed moustache and clothes of immaculate fit, came up to the side of the carriage to help them to alight. Susie experienced a slight shock at first. Despite her short-sightedness, and the *couleur de rose* halo through which she viewed everything, she could not help being aware that this elegant little being was very different from the majestic and fair-haired "Arthur" of her dreams; but when he took off his hat to her, baring his head more completely than an Englishman would have done, it was a comfort to her to see that his eyes were blue, and that his features, though small and neat, were possessed with a

certain air of decision and gravity which completely redeemed them from insignificance.

His manner to his mother and sister, too, no less than to herself, was delightful—a mingling of graceful cordiality and old-world deference which quite fascinated Susie after the domestic bickerings and rudenesses of Clanricarde Gardens, and went far towards recalling the “high thoughts, and amiable words, and courtesy,” etc., of the stainless king, notwithstanding the Bond Street exquisiteness of Mr. Medicott’s attire.

He was extremely quiet. Mrs. Medicott and Virginia rattled away at the very top of their voices, and at a speed hitherto undreamt of in Susie’s slower mind; but though Calton smiled gravely, and listened with the greatest politeness to each, he said little himself, and that chiefly to Susie, in a voice pitched studiously low, and with barely enough American accent to give it an agreeable originality. It is true that he, too, began by asking her questions; but they were chiefly about pictures and music, in both of which subjects he seemed so much at home that Susan felt half ashamed to own that she had not yet been to the Academy, and had never heard either Patti or Joachim in her life. Fortunately, however, the avowal did not seem to overwhelm him with surprise, or make him despise her; and, indeed, the very sweetly naïve admiration with which she evidently regarded the vastness of his “cultural” experiences, and the timid earnestness of her “Will you tell me about them, please?” may have been rather refreshing to a young man blasé with the society of advanced girls, and the shibboleth of conventional art-gossip which criticises all things and reveres none. It was a slight shock certainly to him when, on mentioning that he was going to dine with Sir Frederick Leighton that evening, to meet Millais, he found that Susie mistook the last-named painter for the author of the Angelus, an exquisite photograph of which was lying on the centre-table, and had already excited her fervent admiration; but he was glad at least that she knew what to admire, and not only took the trouble to tell her all he knew of the French artist’s life, but even hunted out an old volume of Scribner, containing some excellent woodcuts of his pictures, to show her. Susie felt as if she could sit there for ever, listening in happy silence, and enjoying her tea and macaroons; but the carriage was waiting, and when she realised

how late it was, even the delight of a drive through the Park, in all the pomp and brilliancy of its afternoon gathering, could not banish an anxious look from her soft eyes, or keep her from being nervously restless to get home.

“You poor little Cinderella!” said Virginia tenderly. “I do believe those people treat you real badly for you to be so frightened of them;” for Susie, blushing terribly, had begged to be set down at the corner of the terrace, instead of at the Farquharsons’ door. “Why don’t you run away?”

“Where to?” asked Susie, smiling a little at the idea; but Virginia was prompt with her answer.

“To us! You come to us, and we’ll carry you off to America, and have lovely times together; won’t we, Calton?”

“I wish you would, if you would only profit by Miss Lane’s society and learn not to talk slang,” said Calton with his grave smile. “Why don’t you try to do like the people you admire?” But Virginia only laughed and gave Susie’s hand a little squeeze.

“If I could do just like her, I shouldn’t admire her so much,” she said saucily; “and Susan Lane don’t mind my slang. She’s my friend, not yours—aren’t you, Susan?”

Susie’s eyes filled with sudden, delicious tears.

“Oh,” she said tremulously, “if I might be——” But the very depth of her feeling almost choked the words; and as the carriage drew up for her to alight, her “Good-bye! Thank you very much!” sounded so bald and constrained, even in her own ears, that she could have beaten herself as soon as she was alone.

“How cold and ungrateful they must think me!” she said to herself. “If only I wasn’t so horribly shy and nervous, or could do something to show that dear, beautiful girl how I love her! To think of her calling me her friend! And I who have so longed for one! Well, my life will be happy enough now, and I must try to read more, and make myself more worthy of her. I wonder if her brother guessed why I asked him where that magazine of Scribner’s was to be got; but I shouldn’t mind his knowing. He must have seen how stupid and ignorant I was, and yet he was not a bit impatient or contemptuous, and he said he wished she would speak like me! Oh yes, and he meant it, too. He is not the sort of man, I can see, to say

anything he doesn't mean; though she needn't have minded, for all that. I would rather talk like her, slang or not, than that she should change, even in a single thing."

I have put all this down to show you that Susie belonged to that almost extinct specimen of girlhood which still believes with highest faith and most fervent enthusiasm in some member of her own sex; and, like most enthusiasts, was not only ready to die all deaths for her faith, but to sweeten all her life with it. Even the sight of the schoolroom clock pointing to six, and the cold tea and plate of bread-and-butter waiting for her on the table, could not take away that novel sweetness at present; nor yet the pert tone of the housemaid asking if she was to clear the tray away.

"Miss Lane hadn't said she was teeing out, and it had been standing there an hour already."

Miss Lane apologised meekly. She had met some friends, she said, who had made her go with them for a cup of tea. She was very sorry to be so late, and her voice was so sweet and gentle that even the irate damsel was soothed, and condescended to say it didn't matter; the while Susie's new friend was asking her brother as they drove homeward:

"Well, John Calton Medicott, and what do you think of her? Say now, I don't want to hurt you; but isn't she like——"

"Not the very least," said her brother decidedly. "The two faces are as different as possible. This one is a child."

"And a very homely-looking one," put in Mrs. Medicott; "but it's just like Jinny. She always does take a fancy to the oddest sort of people. Last time it was an Italian fruit-woman, a dreadful creature with ten lovers."

"Miss Lane's face is not pretty," said Calton gravely, "but it has that infantile purity which you see in Carl Müller's and some of the old masters' pictures of the Virgin. There is something touching, certainly, in its perfect innocence."

But Virginia wouldn't listen to either of them.

"Mother, you're perfectly hateful! I'm sure I wish now that Italian woman had been smothered; and, don't you be so wise, Calton. Susan Lane wasn't like herself to-day, or she wouldn't have looked so happy and childish. If you had seen her

the first time I did, and the look in her eyes——"

"I saw them full of tears when she bid you good-bye. Poor child! I guess she don't have a high time up there," said Calton, with a pardonable relapse into the luxuries of his own language for the moment.

No one, however, need have wasted pity on Susie at that moment. What a wonderful thing happiness is! What a rejuvenator—what a beautifier! What a glorifier of heaven and earth! How easy, too, of attainment; and—alas!—how easy to lose! But why talk of losing it, when it has only just come, and with Susie there had not been even any attaining. It had dropped from heaven into her lap, as it were, and she had taken it into her heart, had hugged and embraced it, and thanked Heaven on her knees for it, without one pang of doubt or even misgiving, such as persons older and riper in this world's wisdom cannot help but entertain over the brightest prospects.

And yet this was no such great thing, after all. She had made a friend—perhaps two—that was all!

But then she had never had a friend before; and only a few days before it had seemed to her as if she should never have an opportunity of gaining such a happiness.

She had even thought herself content without it: content with the dull, starved, colourless life which for four years she, a girl in the heyday of life and youth, had been leading: the life with no warmth in it, no love, no hope, no warm hand-clasps, no sympathetic glances.

If you keep a man in total darkness long enough, you may blind him with the light of a farthing candle.

It was in this way that Susie was blinded now. So, if we take leave to laugh at her, we will keep some tears for the pain of the after operation which too often has to follow on such mental cataract.

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